

More Like Baerista, Am I Right?

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Category: IT (2017)

Genre: Art hoe stan but not really, BARISTA BILL, Beverly Marsh & Richie Tozier Are Best Friends, Bill is bad at making coffee, M/M, Mike + Ben + Eddie + Bill are the barista squad, Miscommunication and pining galore

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kasprak, Mike Hanlon, Richie Tozier, Stan Uris

Relationships: Bill Denbrough/Stan Uris, Bill Denbrough/Stanley Uris, Slight Benverly, reddie if you squint

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Summary:

In which Stan is a fake black coffee drinker, Bill really shouldn't be a barista, and the rest of the losers just want them to get together without a counter in-between them.

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Author's Note:

hi everyone! someone suggested barista bill being in love w/ a totally cute customer that comes into the store one day and i had to write it! ive never written something so long before but i had so much fun!

a big thanku to @stanurinal on tumblr for helping me with stans ridiculous coffee order + his major in uni. as well as literally everything else. this fic would be RUBBISH without you!!

find me on tumblr: royalstanley

EDIT: i cant believe the feedback ive gotten on this - ive actually gotten fan art!

so many thanks to pertatoe on tumblr for creating such a beautiful piece of art for this fic; bill + stan are exactly how i imagined them when i wrote! thankyou so much for sharing your talent with me, its exceptional.

see it here! - <https://pertatoe.tumblr.com/post/166655337542/sketch-from-pastelstanuriss-baerista-fic>

Bill really shouldn't ever, *ever* be allowed near a coffee machine. But his job as a barista was the only reason why he was in college in the first place, so he kind of had to stick with it and make people suffer. He didn't even *like* coffee - he was the one who suggested putting tea on the menu. That was the only positive addition he's ever made to this establishment (the next one will probably be him quitting after he's gotten his degree). Mike, Ben and Eddie were way better at this sort of thing; Bill kind of followed their lead and tried not to break anything along the way. Ben was great at writing things on the huge chalkboard outside that would lure people in, such as *cute baristas + coffee make for an amazing morning!* Eddie made sure that the place was absolutely pristine, and was in charge of refilling the hand

sanitiser dispensers - but that's not exactly a job anyone cared about in the first place. Mike was freakishly good at latte art, and got it perfect every time; Bill always ended up making an unattractive blob rather than a heart, or the masterpieces that Mike managed to produce.

He really preferred taking the orders and leaving everyone else to it; their manager should probably slash his pay in half. Honestly, he was doing them a favour. Keeping them in business, even - Bill didn't know if it was possible to poison someone with bad coffee, but if it was, he'd be the one to do it. Everyone seemed to be aware of this, and if he even went *near* a coffee cup Ben would snatch it out of his hand and pass it to Mike. He couldn't even bring himself to be offended.

After a sleepless night thanks to an important assignment being due and a *lot* of red bull, Bill burst into the shop after trudging through the snow with only a few minutes to spare. Fuck, it was even cold inside. Ben's board outside was a total lie; it read *Warm yourself up with our sweet service and hot chocolate!* The reality was this: Mike warming his hands on the cappuccino machine, Eddie piling on even more layers than he usually wore - a shirt, sweater and a coat, paired with jeans and leggings underneath - and Ben blowing his nose on a crumpled napkin. Bill could barely feel his face due to the unforgiving weather outside, but he knew it was contorted into something resembling sympathy. "Hey, guh-guh-guys. I b-brought pastries?" He held up a bag of croissants and smiled weakly. "How about I get the machines started and we can-"

"No!" Everyone shouted. "No, no. We can handle it, Bill. Just put on your apron and eat a damn croissant." Eddie grabbed him by the shoulders and sat him down in a stool placed behind the counter, handing him a mug of green tea and a plate.

"We're opening in five minutes, okay? Go in the back and get another bottle of chocolate syrup once you've eaten, some asshole asked for 10 pumps in his drink before closing yesterday." Bill nodded and left his food on the counter instead, making his way to the store room and putting his apron over his plaid shirt while reluctantly taking off

his scarf.

While looking around for the syrup, brow furrowed, he heard the friendly *ding!* of the bell above the door. He should probably get out there as soon as possible to do the only job that was safe for him and others to deal with. Grabbing a dusty (*gross*) chocolatey-looking bottle off the shelf, he made his way out to the counter. “H-Here,” he gave the bottle to Eddie, not missing his gagging due to the dust that had collected over the months it had obviously spent in the store room. Before he could apologise, his eyes were immediately drawn to the customer that had entered only a minute before. It seemed like everything was in slow motion - he’d later tell Ben that it was like “T-T-Those romance muh-movies you make m-me watch.” The guy looked around his age, probably a student too. His nose was abnormally red from the harsh winter, and he was swaddled in a huge, soft looking blue scarf. Underneath he wore a white shirt, paired with a grey cardigan, and a black coat on top - he could probably give Eddie and his layers a run for their money. A total hipster, Bill could tell, but something about him screamed creativity and artistry. This was only accentuated by the face that was apparently sculpted by the Greek gods themselves: his eyes were a cool blue that seemed calm and collected, and light brown curls settled about his strong cheekbones. Bill would never, ever poison this guy’s coffee.

Before he could take a step forward to greet the potential love of his life, he noticed a fatal flaw - he was stone-faced. Oh, here we go. He could almost hear the sneering, aloof tone - “*one black coffee to go, make it quick please.*” Bill motioned for Mike to take this one. He could never handle the rude customers, they only made his stutter worse, and their personalities meant that he’d be mocked for it. The hot ones were always the worst. Mike understood his gesture automatically, and Bill turned around to organise the cups in size order to keep his hands busy. He was listening to Mike and Cute But Mean Guys exchange in case he needed to step in, bracing himself for the inevitable disappointment from his demeanour. Turning around to find some stirrers to place near the cups, he noticed the boy’s face had changed into something delicate and soft, asking for the same

order that Bill had predicted, but in a lilting tone.

Bill scowled. Arty-coffee guy *obviously* liked Mike, that's why his personality altered so drastically. Who doesn't? Bill tried to kiss him when he was drunk once; but he was met with a gentle hand pushing him away and a suggestion that he should get to bed. Not only was he kind, he was beautiful - his smile made you feel like you were the most important person in the world, and warmth spread over you like the summer sun on your face when leaving high school for the holidays. Mike also made amazing coffee. Bill actually *burned* coffee. Ben, Mike and Eddie didn't think that was physically possible, but it tasted like fucking *charcoal*.

He knew his awful coffee making skills would be his downfall eventually. Not his stutter, not his inability to get up before 11am on weekends, no - he couldn't make a fucking black coffee to impress a cute customer, therefore missing out on his chance at love. Bill saw the cup exchanging hands and heard a soft "thanks" before watching Art Guy wait for his friend to get his order too.

"Fuck, uh, make me the most sugary thing you can think of. Like, so much syrup my order total will be \$15." Mike laughed warmly at the figure before him - he was so bright it hurt your eyes. A pink hawaiian shirt paired with shorts and sunglasses, in winter. No coat. Barely something that could be classed as shoes. Looking at these two was like staring at the sun and the moon.

After pumping a mix of caramel and vanilla into a milky, sugary coffee, Mike grimaced and handed it over to Sunshine Boy. "Thanks, dude!" He threw a \$20 on the counter, not bothering to check the total. Despite his loud nature, Bill couldn't stop staring at his friend.

"What's his n-n-name?" Bill asked, awed. Apparently he had drifted over to Mike like he was on a cloud.

"Uh, I don't know. Sam something?" Mike replied.

Bill hummed. He rested his chin on his hands and watched him move with grace away from the counter, and towards the area with milk and napkins. He was quickly stuffing packets into his pockets, eyes darting around - his friend was snorting next to him, jabbing him in

the ribs and saying “I don’t know why you just don’t get a different order.”

Cute boy shushed him and walked quickly over to the corner of the room, settling into a large cushioned chair. Interested, Bill leaned over the counter to see what was going on. He was met with ‘Sam’ pouring around 12 packets of sugar into his coffee. He barked out a laugh, then clapped a hand over his mouth to cover it. ‘Sam’s head popped up, scanning the room for the source of laughter. It was too late; Bill had already ducked behind the counter, quickly drinking his (cold) tea and stuffing the croissant into his mouth so he wouldn’t give himself away.

He felt a kick in his side, and looked up to Ben frowning at him. “There’s a customer waiting, Bill. Could you deal with it?” Bill was still laughing internally, but got up and dusted himself off, nodding.

“S-s-sure. Sorry.”

While he painted on his customer service smile and ground out a “W-What can I get f-f-for you today?”, the retreating figures of ‘Sam’ and his friend made him sigh. He was hoping he could pull himself together before they left to approach them, but apparently they weren’t fans of loitering in coffee shops for hours like most were. The final *ding!* rang through his ears as he repeated the customer’s order in a monotone voice to Ben. He and Hipster Guy just weren’t meant to be.

He came in the next day, and Bill could’ve fist pumped in triumph. He wasn’t going to let Mike take the order this time; no, Arty Guy was going to be impressed by *his* mediocre customer service. The slow-motion thing happened again (seriously. Romance movie come to life) and Bill straightened an invisible collar - he forgot he had a baseball t-shirt on for a second - and swept his hand through his hair, smoothing his fringe. ‘Sam’ was wearing a huge, lavender sweater this time, complete with a pale pink scarf dotted with - birds? His sweater was so big the arms covered his hands, and he was huddled into the warm fabric so much he nearly disappeared. Bill could relate.

Pink lipstick had been applied delicately, and he couldn't tell if he was wearing blush or his face was just naturally that flushed and perfect.

The spell was broken when his friend trailed after him, slinging an arm around his shoulders and once again, committing every fashion sin known to man. He seemed to have more sense than yesterday, he was actually wearing jeans instead of shorts this time, but he still had a disgusting hawaiian shirt on - yellow, today. His glasses were askew and taped up in every place you could possibly snap your frames, and Bill respected that he wasn't afraid to look like a walking human disaster.

Eddie was scrubbing the counter - so Bill only had two opponents to eliminate. "Hey, B-B-Ben? Could you please m-muh-muh-make me some tea? I didn't h-h-have any this morning," Bill put on his best *feel sorry for me* face, and Ben smiled.

"Sure." Damn him for taking advantage of his friend's kind nature. He'd pick up one of his shifts next week. However. Bill kind of needed Mike for the next part of his plan; he just couldn't talk to 'Sam'. Maybe he should also stay away from Bill, because if 'Sam' saw them standing next to each other he'd figure out pretty quickly which one was better looking. As he was getting closer, Bill stepped in front of Mike quickly and actually smiled sincerely for once. "H-H-H-Huh...." 'Sam' was stood directly in front of him, his face once again changing into something softer than what you saw when he entered the shop. Maybe he just got really excited at the prospect of coffee.

He waited patiently for Bill to get his stutter under control, and was clear of any signs of impatience or irritation. "Hi," Bill breathed. "Wuh-wuh-what can I g-get you today?"

"Black coffee, please. Large, if you don't mind?" Bill could've drifted up to the heavens. He was genuinely kind to servers. "S-s-sure. Anything else?"

"Oh, yeah. A huge cup of sugar for my friend over there. Hey, Richie." 'Sam' tried to motion his friend over, but it seemed to be useless, considering he was trying to balance around 3 empty coffee cups on his head. How did he even get them?

“How many cavities do you want today?”

Richie’s head whirled around, grinning. “Just as many as yesterday.”

‘Sam’ rolled his eyes.

“The same he got yesterday, please?” Bill nodded, walking over to Mike and whispering the orders.

He grabbed a cup and scrawled ‘Richie’ on one, then hesitated as he grabbed another.

“N-N-Name?” Bill asked, avoiding his eyes and trying to stop his hand from shaking so he wouldn’t drop the sharpie.

“Stan.”

“Stuh-Stuh-Stuh-Stan.” *Way* better than Sam.

“You putting all those letters on his cup?” Richie asked, somehow on the other end of the counter with them now. Bill felt like he should be annoyed, but he couldn’t bring himself to be.

Stan swatted at him. “Don’t be rude. I should’ve gotten- Sorry, what’s your name?”

Bill gaped at him. “Buh-Buh-Buh-Billy. I m-mean, Bill!”

Stan smiled. “I should’ve gotten Bill to write *insensitive asshole garbage person* on your cup.”

“If I’m a garbage person, you’re my garbage man.” Richie fluttered his eyelashes and clung onto Stan dramatically. “Take me for a ride on your garbage truck, Stanny boy.”

“What the fuck does that even mean-”

Bill heard lids being placed on to cups behind him, and took them from Mike quickly. He blinked at him confusedly, but didn’t say anything. “H-H-Here you go.” Stan raised an eyebrow.

"You're certainly fast at making coffee." Bill flushed and laughed awkwardly, rubbing his neck. "It's a t-t-talent?" He hummed and took the cups from Bill, wincing as he gave Richie his monstrosity.

"Are you s-staying?" Bill asked hopefully, gesturing to the seating area - specifically in front of the counter. Stan looked apologetic and began to fish change out of his pocket. "I gotta get to class. Next time, though. Richie! Let's go," he said, before handing money over to Bill. Their hands brushed briefly, and if Bill was being stupid he would say he would never wash that hand again. If.

"Leave me, Stanley, mommy's talking to the pretty man." Richie was leering at Eddie, who was trying his best to remain composed.

"I have other people to serve, *Sir*." Eddie's smile was so sickly sweet it could give Richie more cavities than his drink.

"Well maybe you can service me in another way, if you catch my drift." He wagged his eyebrows, leaning over the counter and trying to pinch Eddie's cheeks. Eddie grimaced and shoved him off. "Please tell me you've taken advantage of our hand sanitiser dispensers before doing that." Richie blinked.

"The what?"

"Oh, fucking hell-" Eddie rushed off to the back, gagging and wiping his face, muttering about "gross hobo germs."

Bill noticed Stan checking his watch and his face being overtaken with panic. "I'll pay for any emotional or physical damage he's caused, but I'm really gonna be late. Tell your friend I'm sorry Richie's an asshole!" He rushed out of the door, making sure Richie was following. He was, but not before yelling "I'll be back for you, my love!"

A frustrated scream came from the storeroom.

“He’s cute, isn’t he?” They walked to campus, Stan’s boots crunching in the snow, snowflakes settling in his hair and creating a glistening crown.

Stan was staring into his cup and swirling the contents around. “Who, Eddie?”

“Who’s Eddie?”

Stan looked at Richie pointedly. “The guy you were slowly killing with your pitiful attempts at flirting.”

“How do you know his name?”

“Because I read name tags!”

“So why couldn’t you just do that with Billy-boy, hm?”

Stan blushed and took a sip of his coffee - then gagged. He obviously didn’t add enough sugar. “He was asking for our order. We were in the middle of a conversation anyway. It made sense.”

“You could’ve just got your coffee and not *insulted me*, then said ‘thanks, Bill. Oh, and can I suck your dick, by the way?’”

He sighed. “It’s too early for this. Bill is just a nice barista that made us nice coffee and now we have to get to class.”

“Barista? More like *Bae* rista, am I right?” Richie looked around for someone to high-five, preferably Beverly, but deflated when he only saw Stan shooting him an unimpressed look.

He pointed to the other side of campus. “Your building is that way. I’ll see you at five.”

As Richie walked away, he yelled “Yeah! At the coffee shop! I will get you your prince charming served with whipped cream, Stanley!”

When was 'next time' going to be? Bill suspected everyone wanted to strangle him; he couldn't tell you how many times he's nearly shoved one of them to the ground when he heard the bell ring, ready to serve Stan. He let Eddie iron his apron now. He even washed his hair with strawberry shampoo - he heard Stan say before that that was his favourite fruit (Richie seemed to have the most random train of thought; he asked everyone this question).

While busying himself by asking Ben what he was putting on the board today, Stan walked in with Richie in tow. This time it was black jeans, a white shirt, and a well-fitted denim jacket. The scarf of the day was a deep red spotted with green stripes, wrapped twice around his neck and thrown over his shoulder. Stan smiled at Bill brightly, which made him straighten his back and brush imaginary dust off of his shirt. Maybe having a neat, ironed apron was a turn-on.

Before he could build himself up to talk to Stan, he noticed the same smile was directed at Mike, Ben and Eddie only a few seconds later. That was when he reminded himself that Stan was just kind; and all Bill did was talk to him for a few seconds and write his name on a cup. He sighed and braced himself for being mentally assaulted by his beauty, as well as plugging his ears when Richie came over. Stan's eyes were bright and his smile was wide as he made his way over to the end of the counter, his "Hey, Bill," muffled as he unwrapped his scarf from around his neck, completely covering his face in the process. Once he'd successfully taken it off and tucked it under his arm, Bill's weird staring was interrupted by Richie saying in a sing-song voice " *Staaaan* ? Can you buy me my coffee? *Pleeease*? I'm broke."

He sighed and looked at Bill forlornly. "I feel like I'm looking after a five year old. But then again, this is what I agreed to when I signed the adoption papers." Stan said solemnly. Richie planted a sloppy kiss on his cheek, "You sure did Daddy-o!"

Stan wiped the saliva off of his face, grimacing. "Please. Never call me that. I'll buy you your candy explosion. And a black coffee, please."

Bill laughed and wrote their names on cups, even daring to put a smiley face next to Stan's. He was so suave. "S-S-So. How has yuh-yuh-your day b-been?" Bill said awkwardly, fumbling with the cups and handing them over to Mike.

"Hm. Nothing eventful so far, considering it's 6am."

Bill wanted to smack his head against the counter. Repeatedly. But Eddie would probably get mad at him for getting brain matter all over the surfaces, so he refrained from doing so. "Ha ha. Y-y-yeah. Silly me."

"What about you? Had any customers from hell yet?"

"Well, you guys are my first, and-"

"You should add some more milk into that." Richie said to Eddie in a disapproving tone, referring to his disgusting coffee.

"Why don't you just shut the fuck up, Einstein, because I know what I'm doing," Eddie snapped back - he made sure to add some more milk when he wasn't looking, though.

Stan looked at him, eyebrows raised.

"Want to change that answer before you finish it?"

"Kinda. You guys are my first, but now I've only had one bad customer so far. Well. Eddie has." Bill's attempt at flirting was probably coming across as desperation for tips - which he'd appreciate, but a date would be a great substitute.

Stan's response seemed to echo his thoughts. "I promise you don't have to suck up that hard to get a tip."

He was speaking in a normal register, but Richie managed to hear and snort "Suck up. Hard. *Tip.* " Stan was handed his drink from Bill, and dangled it in front of Richie precariously, looking vaguely threatening. "Don't think I won't do it, asshole."

"Please, *please* do it," Eddie begged, leaning so far away from Richie he was close to falling over and causing a coffee bean avalanche.

Stan rolled his eyes and placed Richie's order on a table far, far away from Eddie. "Go fetch."

Richie made a noise of triumph and bounded over to the area, clumsily sitting down and gulping it in a way that was not humanly possible for a drink that hot.

"Do you mind if I stick around here with you for a while? Richie is lethal once he's downed that." Bill's mouth went dry, and his lips moved soundlessly for a good thirty seconds.

"S-sure. That's f-f-fine."

Stan moved to the end of the counter near the dessert selection - the sign next to them read *Muffins are known as ugly cupcakes - but we think they taste better!*, accompanied by a smiling muffin (courtesy of Ben and Mike). Bill ducked behind the counter for a few seconds, and slid a handful of sugar packets across the surface.

"F-f-for your coffee." Stan ducked his head and laughed.

"I tried so hard to hide that."

Bill snorted. "I-I-If anything yuh-yuh-you made it o-obvious." Stan took the packets and took the lid off of the cup, tongue poking out as he ripped them open and poured them in. Taking a stirrer from the side, he swirled the contents together, and Bill watched them disappear into the liquid - and this is where he was going to die. Stan took the stick out of the cup and placed it in his mouth, sucking on it and licking off the coffee. He looked up at Bill from underneath his lashes and smiled sheepishly around the object. "Didn't want to make a mess."

Bill nodded shakily. "S-s-smart."

Desperate to take his mind off of what just happened, he started to make himself some tea. Stan kept his eyes on him the whole time, as

if Bill making tea was the most fascinating thing in the world. “What kind is that?” he asked.

“Green tea,” Bill replied, sinking the bag into the water and sighing with relaxation at the smell. “Coffee k-k-kind of makes me shuh-shuh-shaky. And I’m a-already stressed as a st-st-student.”

Stan nodded. “Any chance this tea has a really high sugar content? I might be converted.” Bill laughed and walked back over to him. “N-Not really.”

“Guess I’m just going to have to keep coming to you for my sugar, then.” Bill heard a pained “oh my god ” from across the room; probably from Richie. Like last time, he tried to block him out. He’d practically imprinted on Eddie now anyway, so he’s no longer his issue.

He shook off the idea that Stan might actually be flirting with him, and switched to neutral ground.

“S-S-So what do yuh-yuh-you study?” Bill asked while taking a sip of his tea.

“Business management.”

Bill choked on his drink, blushing while wiping his mouth. Stan raised his eyebrows, a small smile on his face. “I know. I kinda stick out in my class. They all call me ‘pretty boy.’”

“You a-are. P-Puh-Puh-Pretty, I mean.” Nice, Bill. You actually managed to compliment him without choking!

Stan grinned into his cup, but it turned into something more neutral as he asked, “What do you study?”

“It’s not as pr-pr-professional as yuh-yours, but I d-do English. Cr-creative writing and s-s-stuff.”

“Sure, professionalism is all a guy wants in life,” he replied drily. “Got a novel in the works?”

“N-No. Haven’t gotten eh-eh-any inspiration yet.”

Stan smiled at him. “Maybe I could be your muse.”

Richie cackled in the corner.

“Smooth.” He could also see Mike and Ben hiding their smiles behind their hands.

“Shut up and drink your fucking coffee, Richie.”

His eyes never left Bill’s.

Bill couldn’t stop staring. He was so beautiful. Resisting the urge to say “hey, is it possible for someone to get a degree in modelling? Because you’d be top of the class”, Bill listened to Stan talk about just how many scarves he has, “Seriously? I stopped counting after 20. My mom knits me one every year”, when exactly Richie will leave Eddie alone, “Probably never. But he does respect boundaries - sometimes”, and blushed when Stan stopped for a second, sniffed the air, and said “Is that strawberries?”

He was relaxed, but completely taken in by Stan’s personality. Which is why he didn’t hear the first one hundred “Hey! Excuse me! *Excuse me!* ”

Both he and Stan shot up quickly, and had to stare into the face of pure evil. His face was scrunched up in fury, and Bill was pretty sure he was shaking. The customer was flushed red, but not in the beautiful way Stan always was - he was just. Completely unappealing. “S-So sorry, Sir.” Bill said coolly. “Wuh-wuh-what can I g-g-get you?”

The customer huffed. “My time back, you uh-uh-uh- *idiot.* ”

Bill wanted to cry. Not only did he feel like shit, this was happening in front of Stan. Now he’d realise how pathetic he was, how stupid he sounded, oh god-

Stan was stepping towards the customer from hell, hands clenched into fists. “This guy over here? He’s far too nice to say anything to you. But I happen to have a friend that’s *really* hopped up on sugar

right now, and has the climbing abilities of a monkey, so if you don't want to deal with him and-" he picked up his mug of coffee, "an unfortunate accident involving a really hot drink, I think you should apologise."

The customer rolled his eyes.

"You really think-"

Stan made a move to throw the contents of his cup, and he flinched. "Okay, okay! I'm sorry!"

"Bill," Stan said icily. "His name is Bill."

"I'm sorry, Bill."

His smile was twisted into something that was far from the blinding sunshine he got to witness every day, and it was kind of terrifying. And also kind of hot.

Eddie stepped in and cleared his throat. "So sorry, Sir, but we're actually getting ready to close up. So, if you wouldn't mind." Bill glanced at the clock. It was 2pm. The customer grumbled and walked out of the store, and the *ding!* had never sounded so satisfying. Bill breathed out slowly and relaxed against the counter.

"T-T-Thankyou."

"It's okay." Stan said kindly. "Anytime." Bill kind of wanted people to shout at him all the time so Stan could save him - maybe he could pay someone to do that? No, too far.

"I'm really sorry, Bill, but I have to go meet my dad for lunch - are you sure you're okay?" He looked concerned, and also as if he wanted to reach out and give him a hug. "Y-Yeah, I'm fine. See y-y-you later." Stan's worried expression didn't fade, but he began to make for the door. "Oh! Eddie?" Stan turned around to face him. "I'm sorry, but I got a few drops of coffee on the floor. Do you have a mop?" Eddie waved him away, visibly pleased.

"It's fine. I'll sort it out." He waved back, finally exiting the shop.

“Okay, Bill.” Eddie breathed. “You can keep him.”

“Does that mean you have to keep me, too?” Richie said excitedly.

“...No.”

In Beverly’s dorm a few days later, Stan swiped pale purple eyeshadow over his lids, mouth open with concentration.

“If you wanna impress him, you’re gonna have to whip out your *good* scarf.” Richie said seriously.

Stan rolled his eyes. “And which one is that?”

“Y’know. The um. Grey one that is kinda like a hood at the same time?”

Beverly patted him excitedly. “The snood! Oh my god, please wear the snood!”

Stan wrinkled his nose as he applied mascara. “I thought my good scarf was the polka dot one?”

Richie and Beverly shook their heads simultaneously - “Definitely the snood.”

“Fine. But I can’t bring Richie anymore; I don’t think Eddie will forgive me for it.” Richie made a noise of protest, and Beverly patted Stan’s shoulder.

“I’ll come with you this time. The guy behind the counter with Baerista? He’s cute. Writes little haikus on my cup when I come in. And Stan - no purple. Go for a bronze smoky eye if you’re going to wear red.” Stan nodded understandingly and grabbed a makeup wipe.

After the mention of Ben, Richie threw himself into Beverly's lap, and she ruffled his hair. "Don't let him steal you away from me, honey."

The redhead rolled her eyes as she plaited his messy dark curls. "Write me some poetry and then we'll talk, asshole." He sighed dramatically.

"Well I mean, your invite to my slam poetry night must be lost in the mail."

Okay. Third try before Stan comes in for his daily coffee. He can do this.

Bill had his eyes screwed shut in concentration as he tried to read the instructions he'd written for himself around a week ago, *How to Make the Perfect Caramel Macchiato!* After a long while of watching Stan steal countless packets of sugar, and Bill giving him countless packets of sugar, he figured he could get Stan to try a drink that wasn't devoid of all sweetness as well as happiness. He'd stayed back after closing with Mike as he tried his best to teach him the basics - "Dude, do you even know how to steam milk?" - and could now make Stan's original order. Which was a start. After freeing Mike from his duties of babysitting him so he didn't destroy the entire shop's stock, youtube was next. Hipsters (*like Stan, but not as attractive, Bill thought*) showed him how to make the caramel macchiato that Bill thought he'd like - if he didn't, he'd be fucked. Eventually, after the tenth try, drinking it didn't make him want to gag, so he figured it should be okay. It's not like it was going to get any better by Bill's standards.

Ding!

Bill's breath caught in his throat, and he nearly dropped his mediocre

macchiato. Stan was wearing a red sweater that fell all the way down to his knees, and a pair of leggings that highlighted just how slim his legs were. He thought the pastels Stan usually wore on his eyes were pretty; but this time the dark, bronzey tones perfectly blended into his sockets made him melt. A redhead accompanied him, freckles were splattered across her face and she seemed to be the sort of person who constantly wore a small smile no matter where she went.

Stan seemed to have a penchant for friends that didn't give a fuck about the weather, as she only had on a summer dress that was paired with thick winter tights and a comfy knitted cardigan thrown on top. He assumed he had another friend to impress, so Bill steeled himself for another Richie - however, as Stan kept walking towards him, his friend veered off to the side to talk to Ben. She put a cup on the counter and poked at it, looking at Ben with a smile. Bill peered closer, and - *oh*. That's *Beverly*. Beverly who Ben has been pining after ever since she walked into the shop a few weeks ago, whose laugh filled the entire room when he shyly admitted to listening to New Kids on the Block. He's been writing haikus on her cups for the last two weeks, and his boards outside have been getting more and more sappy - the last said *January embers - my heart burns there too*. Ben was blushing and stumbling over a compliment; "Y-Your hair looks beautiful, Beverly." She tucked her hair behind her ear and grinned, twirling a lock of it around her finger. Bill wished he had that natural, friendly aura like Ben, or the charm that Beverly apparently possessed.

Before Stan could even say hi (or before he was a close enough distance for a proper conversation), Bill blurted out "What's t-t-the deal with y-your order?"

Stan looked at him confusedly. "Huh?"

"Y-you buh-buy black coffee and dump s-s-sugar in it."

"Oh. I guess I don't want anyone in my class to think I'm weak or whatever. Have to live up to the stereotype."

Bill stared. He was being completely serious. "They c-c-can't even see wuh-what you're drinking!" Stan looked insanely embarrassed now.

"I guess, but what if they do see one day, and I'll be like, a business major fraud-"

He couldn't help it. Once he started laughing, he couldn't stop.

"You're such a fuh-fuh-fucking dork, S-Stan."

Stan mumbled a half-hearted "shut up," before clearing his throat and saying " *Anyway*. I'll have a black coffee."

Bill shook his head. "N-N-Not today."

"What? Am I being cut off?"

He shook his head again. "I'm gonna m-m-make you suh-something you'll actually l-like."

Stan put his elbows on the counter and stopped with his face centimetres away from Bill. "I'm interested."

Bill cleared his throat and stepped back from the counter abruptly, taking a mug from the side and grabbing his crumpled instructions from his apron pocket. "Y-You have t-t-to look away. So you're suh-suh-surprised." Stan nodded faux seriously and shut his eyes, talking about his classes and "a really pretty bird, Bill, but Bev distracted me with one of Ben's poems. He's really talented, by the way." Bill was glad he couldn't see him right now; he dropped a carton of milk, and just before he caught it it managed to spill all the way down his apron. After a few minutes of swearing under his breath and occasionally glancing at Stan to see if he was silently laughing at him, he triumphantly placed the mug in front of him. "H-here."

Stan pulled it towards him and inspected it cautiously. "What is it?"

"A c-c-caramel macchiato. I th-th-think you'll l-like it. It actually has shuh-shuh-sugar." What Stan didn't know is Bill had a few packets of it clenched in his fist - he didn't have much faith in himself.

He sipped it cautiously, and Bill watched him with baited breath.

"Oh," Stan moaned. "Oh my god."

“G-G-Good?”

“ *So good.*”

Eddie coughed delicately. “Who knew Bill Denbrough could make decent coffee.”

Bill shushed him - he didn't want Stan to know he wasn't the one making his coffee every day (Stan already knew that). He licked cream off of his lips and Bill stared at him; his mouth hanging open and his eyes wide. “T-The good thing is y-y-you can have it cuh-cuh-cold in summer,” Bill croaked.

Stan held his hand out. “I hate to do this to you, but...”

He raised his eyebrows. “S-Seriously?”

Stan nodded. “Please.”

Bill sighed and placed packets of sugar into his palm.

“I'll only take two; this is pretty much close to perfect.”

“So it isn't b-b-burnt?”

“What?” Stan looked puzzled.

“U-Uh. Nothing.”

Stan shuffled nervously and gestured towards a table. “I'm going to sit down, if you have a few minutes?”

Bill's immediate thought was a resounding yes , but before he could respond he was met with the pleading face of the rest of his team - the customers were piling up. “I c-c-can't. I want to! B-But. Duty c-c-calls.” Stan's face fell, but he nodded and sat in his usual chair; the one where Bill was lucky enough to witness the sugar fiasco. He tried not to be too disappointed that it was so far away from him. It's not like it would make a difference if he sat with Stan anyway, as he drank in his presence no matter what. He exuded calm and kindness, but Bill noticed he was always alert - he found it fascinating to look at his college work laid neatly out in front of him as he sipped his

coffee, file dividers in pastel colours, loopy, beautiful handwriting that made business management look interesting (slightly). Bill couldn't deal with this anymore - he'd had to ask a customer to repeat their order three times, as he was too transfixed on Stan trying to pick up his pen that'd been dangling from his mouth as he read.

Mike nudged him on his way to get the strawberry syrup. "Put your number on his cup, give him one to go," he whispered. "I'll give it to him so you're not embarrassed." Mike was a genius. Bill ignored the protests of a young girl desperate for a chai latte and began making another macchiato - he wanted to have it done before Stan left, and he could see him gathering his things. He pretty much burned his left hand with steamed milk while preparing it, but eh. Scrawling *CALL ME* on the cup along with his number, he quickly gave it to Mike. He watched him call Stan over with a friendly smile, saying "it's on the house" and giving him the cup with the number facing outwards.

Stan was confused but happy to get the free drink, and left the shop without saying goodbye to Bill - he seemed to be fiddling with something behind the counter and looked busy, so he left him. Making a move to take a sip, he noticed bold black numbers on the other side, accompanied with a *CALL ME*. Stan smiled, relieved that Bill had finally gotten the message; it was exhausting to pine after him rather than actually date him. Halfway through wrestling his phone out of his pocket to programme the number into his phone, he stopped, his breath coming out as white clouds in the bitter air. Mike gave him the drink. It's Mike's number. He was flattered, really, and he'd marry him just for the coffee, but he wasn't a cute tall guy with a love for plaid and baseball t-shirts underneath his apron - someone who stared at him while he thought he wasn't looking, someone who complimented him on his organisation skills of all things. Stan sighed and quickly drank his coffee before throwing it in a trashcan. Mike had barely even spoken to him, he just didn't understand. He thought, for once, he'd impressed someone he liked and they enjoyed his company enough to want more. Maybe not.

Bill watched from the window. Watched him throw the cup away without a second glance. Eddie yelled, "Guys, I told you. Use your designated cloths. They're colour co-ordinated. I don't want your germs!" Bill would usually listen, but everything was a disappointing, grim blur at the moment. He didn't say goodbye to Stan as he left. Maybe he knew all along that Stan wouldn't actually consider something more - he made him his coffee and crept on him while he worked and that was it. He even learned how to be an actual barista, for crying out loud, and that turned out to be his downfall. Beverly remained in the shop, and he noticed her kissing Ben on the cheek and placing a slip of paper in his hand before exiting, popping her gum and winking at Eddie.

Ding!

At least Ben's love life was going well. Maybe it was karma for him not picking up his shift last week like he promised.

Stan shoved another spoonful of cookie dough ice cream into his mouth. "I was sure he liked me," he mumbled, resting his head on Beverly's shoulder.

"Can't both he and Mike like you?" Stan scoffed.

"I'm not *that* good looking." Beverly took her spoon from the arm of the sofa, grabbing the tub and digging out a huge mouthful. "I'm just saying - he seemed pretty into you. Richie said the same."

“It’s not like he’s a reliable source.”

“Yeah, well. I am. I saw the way he looked at you. Total puppy love. You were writing an essay on the economic benefits of installing solar panels on an office block and he looked like he wanted to jump you, for fuck’s sake.”

Stan frowned. “You have no idea how business management works.”

Sighing, she snatched the spoon from his hand and placed it on the table which she was resting her feet on. “Stop changing the subject. I know this isn’t like you, but don’t you think you should talk to him? It’s been three days. Even if he doesn’t want to date you,” Stan winced, “you want to be his friend, right?” A nod. Beverly looked satisfied and patted him on the head. “Now stop moping. Once you’ve got your shit together, you can go out and buy me ice cream. *And* get a coffee.”

Stan was psyching himself up to open the door to the coffee shop. He could see Bill through it, smiling at customers and accepting money - but it was too small, too fake, and he dropped it every time a customer turned away. He didn’t know what he’d do if he made that smile disappear completely. Shaking his head and clearing it of all negative thoughts, he pushed the door open and was immediately enveloped in the cosy warmth and intoxicating smell of the environment. Iciness seemed to be radiating from Bill - Mike was always cheery, Eddie always frantic, and Ben seemed to glow from the inside due to his blossoming relationship with Bev, but he just looked. *Awful*. Stan didn’t want to the labour the point, but it was just such a contrast from the way he usually was.

The way he was when he spent time with you, a hopeful voice whispered, a voice Stan had been repressing for the last few days.

He felt for the crumpled piece of paper he’d stuffed in his pocket, an afterthought, nothing really. Well, if you count his phone number as

nothing. His phone number that he was going to give to Bill. Which he would then use to ask Bill out. Maybe. Stan breathed out loudly and marched over to the counter with determination - Bill looked over towards the sudden movement and their eyes met. “Stuh-Stuh-Stan?”

“Bill. Hi.”

“What a-a-are you-”

“I saw the number. On the cup.” Stan blurted. He meant to work it into the conversation with a lot more subtlety, but he didn’t really have anything left to lose at this point. “And it made me realise, I know who I’d really like to...to...” While he was thinking of how to end his sentence, Bill’s face seemed to crumple.

“I-I-I understand. That you duh-duh-didn’t call me. It w-was a stupid idea. I didn’t m-m-mean it.”

Stan looked up with confusion. It was Bill’s number? “Oh?”

Bill nodded. “I thuh-thuh-think I j-just got c-c-confused.”

Fuck. He began to slowly back away from the counter, running his hands through his hair. Stan could feel his half-hearted smile fading, he was falling into himself and shutting down. “I think we’re done here. Bye, then. Sorry.”

“Why are you s-” before he could let Bill finish his sentence, Stan was out the door. The only thing indicating he was there at all was the icy breeze taking over Bill’s devastated expression.

He wasn’t there to hear a faint “Y-You forgot your shuh-shuh-sugar...”, and his favourite barista holding out crumpled packets to thin air, an automatic gesture he’d adopted after only a few weeks.

Beverly walked into Stan’s dorm, armed with blankets and more ice

cream. She flopped down on the bed next to the miserable, curly haired boy, smiling at him sympathetically and handing him the essentials. “*Say Yes to the Dress ? Really?*” Stan nodded and turned down the volume. “Bill really likes it,” he mumbled. “Got me addicted.” He pulled a blanket all the way up to his nose, trying to sniffle as quietly as possible. Beverly knew he hated looking ‘pathetic’ in front of anyone, but it was hard to ignore that when he was surrounded by tissues and started getting choked up when the bride mentioned her husband-to-be.

After two hours of binge watching and rolling her eyes at the discarded tissues piling up, Beverly muted the TV and turned to face Stan.

“Richie and I are going to see Ben, Eddie and Mike later. Wanna come?” Stan seemed to disappear into the blanket completely and she could barely see his head shaking from side to side.

“I don’t think I could deal with seeing him,” he took the TV off of mute and frowned at a mom refusing to pay for the bride’s dream dress, “and if I see Mike too I’ll die of embarrassment.”

“Do you not know either of them at all? You know nothing would change.”

“Maybe with Mike. But the way Bill looked when I tried to tell him. It’s like he was preparing himself for bad news.” Beverly pulled him close and kissed the top of his head - “I can’t say anything to change your mind?” No response.

“Okay. Just try and go for a walk, though? Maybe get a coffee? It doesn’t have to be from their shop.” A nod this time.

Getting up, cleaning up the few tissues that were on the bed - god, even when he was heartbroken he folded his tissues after using them - she turned to Stan for the last time before she left, blowing a kiss. He smiled faintly and reciprocated. “Thankyou.”

After Bev had left, Stan reluctantly got out of bed. He looked desperately at the TV, contemplating moving on to Cake Boss instead of getting ready. Buddy was making a zombie cake, so maybe he could just - no. Beverly was right, this was starting to get ridiculous. They weren't even dating, for crying out loud. Bill obviously thought they were barely even friends. Maybe he noticed Stan staring at him pathetically and put his number on his cup to give him a bit of an ego boost. That was the worst case scenario, though: Stan knew deep down Bill would never do something like that to him, no matter what he thought their relationship was.

He couldn't exactly go into the shop again, as he was terrified of any interaction with anyone aware of their situation right now. But whenever Stan walked out of the door after picking up his drink, he saw another cafe across the street. Maybe then he could check in on Bill while simultaneously satisfying his need for caffeine.

Ding!

Ding!

Bill didn't even bother to look up from his phone anymore. He was trying to break out of the routine he'd been following for the past few days - being on edge every time someone entered the store around the same time Stan would usually stop by, looking at his reflection in the cappuccino machine and grabbing a cup along with a sharpie. The barista was just setting himself up for disappointment; their last conversation was blunt and final, the end of whatever they had. They didn't even get around to going to Bill's dorm on a weekend and watching re-runs of *Say Yes to the Dress* .

The bell signalled the arrival of Beverly and Richie. They'd been visiting often due to Ben being Bev's boyfriend (a recent decision) and Richie's fascination with irritating Eddie at every moment he had spare. Mike was practising more latte art, so would give them both a coffee every day with a different, more elaborate design. When it wasn't busy one of the three baristas would man the counter (they took turns), and the rest would sit with Beverly and Richie - they never mentioned Stan when Bill was there, but when he was on serving duty he could feel their sympathetic looks burning into him, as well as hear their hushed conversations.

"Billy boy. Michael. Haystack. Eddie-bear." Eddie scowled and threw a muffin across the room at Richie - unfortunately, he caught it with ease and took a big bite out of it, crumbs spraying across the room as he shouted "Thanks!". Bill nodded at him, and caught Beverly's eye and did the same. He hated their worried expressions. Maybe he could take it if it was just Beverly, but even Richie was being kind to him, no longer joking about his shitty attitude and instead just asking for his order and bounding off to tease everyone else.

He wanted to scream "I'm f-f-fine!", but he knew he'd receive five pats on the back and a "We know, Bill." So he was hunched over the counter with his tea, hoping that the steam would wake him up and help him reach some epiphany concerning the situation he's found himself in because of a stupid crush.

While settling into the comforting background noise of Eddie and Richie's banter, Bill saw a flurry of motion from outside from a figure he recognised immediately. His scarf was so long it was nearly trailing on the floor, his coat pulled tight around him to combat the weather, and his unmistakable curls were bouncing as he walked. Bill's heart leapt in his throat, and he went to ask Beverly and Richie why they didn't tell him - before he could, the figure crossed the road. Into the other coffee shop. Their *rivals*. He didn't hate Stan, not at all, but he was most definitely witnessing a betrayal right now.

Bower's Breakfast Foods (they were barely even a coffee shop!) was a travesty - they bought cheap coffee grounds, didn't bake their own pastries, and stole Ben's idea of putting a board outside of the shop. However, they only used it to insult his slogans; writing things such as *We don't need to give you service with a smile when the coffee speaks*

for itself!, which is. Ridiculous.

He caught Stan's eyes before he entered, and he did his best to channel all of his disapproving energy into his stare. The look that was returned was blank - his face was different, absent of the usual glow Bill loved, and he was taken aback. Bill didn't want to bother Stan's friends with this recent development, as he was most likely going to be dragged to Bowers' by his hair, forced to face the person he wanted to see most in a place he wanted to be in the least.

The atmosphere was cold. No one bothered to smile at him when he walked inside. Stan missed Mike's easygoing smile and Eddie's frantic orders (accompanied with him waving around a dustpan and brush), along with Ben's gentle small talk and cheery "Have a nice day." He didn't bother to talk to the barista, only pausing when he noticed his bright red baseball shirt. The familiar sight left him fumbling for his change, causing the sneering boy behind the counter to roll his eyes and tap his fingers against the surface. Stan couldn't find the motivation to shock him with a sharp, rude comment, so instead took his coffee and shut up.

"Do you have any sugar?"

The barista looked up. "What?"

"*Sugar*. Have you heard of it?"

"Oh. No. Why do you want to add sugar to a black coffee, man? Makes no sense. Just ask for some sugary shit like a caramel macchiato or something."

Stan sighed and sipped at the ominous looking liquid. "Whatever. Thanks anyway."

He didn't bother leaving a tip.

“Go, go! Have fun, go away, go bird watching, I hear the pigeons look nice this year, leave-”

“But wait, no, my binoculars-”

Richie shut the door in Stan’s face.

“We need to do something about this. I’m actually starting to develop feelings for Bill the way he keeps fucking going on about him all the time.”

Beverly nodded. “Ben says that Baerista did mean to put his number on the cup, he just thought Stan blew him off when he threw it in the trash.”

“I hate this. I hate them. I’m too beautiful to deal with this right now. I’ve got more going on in my life, y’know?”

“What, like terrorising Eddie and coming up with terrible nicknames for your new-found friends?”

“ *Exactly* . Now come on, we have some matchmaking to do. It’s *bean* long enough.”

“Did you just make a coffee pun? I swear to god...”

Bill sat with his blue olympia typewriter, attempting to conjure up an idea for a novel, a short story, *anything*. He was far too engrossed in his thoughts to hear the obnoxious thudding paired with the calm strolling of two figures coming down the hall - and the insistent banging on his door only a few seconds after.

“Big Bill! Bill! Billy! Billy Bob! Billy-o! Open up!” A pause. “He’s not going to open the door. I guess it’s time to break it down.” Just

catching the end of the sentence, Bill leapt up and yanked the door open, staring into the faces of Beverly and Richie. The redhead waved.

“Hi! We’re your personal intervention pals.”

Bill tried to listen, honestly, but was blinded by colourful lights.

“R-R-Richie. Do you have fuh-fuh-fucking light-up sk-sk-sketchers on?”

Richie grinned and stomped his feet. “Obviously. I had to get them specially made. Y’know. Because my feet are so big. You know what they say about guys with big feet.”

He rubbed his hand over his face, sighing. “Mhm. S-Sorry, personal i-i-intervention...?”

“Yep. For you being a total ding-dong.”

“L-L-Listen. I duh-duh-don’t want to deal with this right n-now.”

Beverly pushed Richie aside, causing him to stumble, and his shoes to turn into disco central. “We just want to ask you about what’s happening with Stan,” she said softly. “We’re worried about you two.”

“N-Nothing h-h-happened,” Bill replied, “he just duh-d-decided he didn’t want to t-talk to me.”

Richie and Beverly both raised their eyebrows. “Please, Bill, get your head out of your ass. This is so irritating. Stan’s wearing his breakup sweater. You guys weren’t even together!” Bill winced at the unappealing truth.

Beverly caught his attention by prodding him in the chest.

“Hey. He thought it was Mike’s number on the cup, not yours. We hate being the messengers when you two could just talk. Just go to his room, okay? Richie is gonna stay with Eddie in your dorm tonight while you get your shit together.”

“He takes stuff like this pretty hard. Stan really likes you - he has. Issues with this sort of thing. Never thinks he’s good enough. So just suck his dick and get it over with, yeah?”

Bill was overwhelmed with the information (and shocked at Richie being slightly serious for once), so he nodded. “C-C-Can I at least guh-get changed f-f-first?”

The duo looked him up and down, taking in his ripped jeans, two day old pajama t-shirt, and bright yellow slippers.

“Oh, honey. Sure.”

They left him to get ready after they were completely sure he was going through with it; Beverly squeezing his shoulder with a little too much force that made him wince. Richie stomped his feet again before planting a kiss on Bill’s cheek with an obnoxious *smack!*

“Don’t fuck this up Billy Bob. I need you to both be happy so I can drink coffee without the mix of gay sadness and sexual tension.” A final ruffle of his already messed up hair, and they were gone. Bill sighed and tugged on his sneakers, tying the laces with shaky hands and taking in slow breaths. As an afterthought, he grabbed a hoodie from the floor. It would be ideal for him to not die of hypothermia on the way there. As he was rushing he didn’t realise it was actually Eddie’s jacket - it barely went down to his waist and the sleeves were up to his elbows. Well, he was already out the door and Stan couldn’t think he was more of an idiot than he already did, so he didn’t bother to go change.

Bill’s mind was racing and he couldn’t hang on to a coherent thought for more than a second. His legs moved on autopilot; he remembered Stan offhandedly mentioning where he lived with Richie a few weeks ago - and maybe he’d stopped outside the building a few times trying to build up the courage to visit. Today was the day he’d been playing out in his head ever since Stan first entered the coffee shop - a

confession, happiness, a kiss. Breathing out slowly, he opened the door to the building and walked up the stairs to find number 23. Bill had never found a piece of wood to be more ominous. Opening it was the difference between the blossoming of a new relationship, whatever it turned out to be, or losing someone he'd never felt more close to. Now it was time to actually knock. It was almost as if he couldn't remember how to make his hand into a fist. After a few seconds of weird clenching, Bill knocked quietly. "Come in, Rich," a small voice said weakly. Okay, so maybe he had the element of surprise on his side. Maybe he wouldn't kick him out as quickly. Opening the door, he peered into the room hesitantly - Stan's side was pristine, Richie's more chaotic (obviously). His eyes drifted towards the floor and he saw an actual strip of tape dividing the area; and a sign above it in perfect calligraphy stating *Richie do not fucking touch my stuff*.

Before he had a chance to drink it all in (and laugh, because apparently he forgot what situation he was faced with), he heard a sharp intake of breath. Turning to the side and facing Stan was one of the most relieving moments of his life; no matter how much he was worried about his feelings towards him, it was like he acted as a way to calm Bill. If he was being really cheesy, it was almost as if Stan was like the human form of green tea.

"H-Hi."

Stan pulled his knees up to his chest. He was still in bed, surrounded by the blankets Beverly had provided. "Hi," he mumbled.

"I-I-I understand if y-you don't want to talk to m-m-me right nuh-now, but I w-want to eh-explain. C-Can you puh-puh-please listen to me f-for five minutes?"

Bill's eyes scanned the empty coffee cups stacked neatly on the floor, and felt slightly hurt when he didn't see his coffee shop's insignia. He was pulled out of his petty observation by a curt "Sure."

Okay. Okay. He could do this. He'd been practising during the fifteen minute walk to Stan's building. "I w-was really stuh-stuh-stuh.... *fuck*. I was s-stupid. I-I was a cuh-cuh-coward. I d-didn't tell you h-how I f-f-f-felt, I l-let someone else duh-do that for me. I g-got to s-s-see you

everyday for w-weeks and I cuh-couldn't spit it out. Y-You've always b-been upfront with me..."

"I haven't." Stan interrupted. His face was still expressionless, but hope shined in his eyes. "I just shut down when you tried to explain. I took it the wrong way. I know you thought I threw away your number because I didn't like you, but I thought it was Mike's, I swear. Then when you said it was a mistake giving me your number...I don't know."

"I-It wasn't!" Bill blurted out. "I'm so s-s-sorry. I got u-us into this b-b-by trying to be ch-cheesy and romantic. Y-You m-make me that w-way. You're just so a-a-amazing."

Stan began to sit upright, pulling the blanket off from around his shoulders and placing it carefully on the bed. "I just. Okay. I need the facts right now. You wanted me to call you?"

Bill nodded.

"You made Mike give me your number on a cup because you're a huge dork?"

A smile was growing. Bill nodded again.

"Ben, Mike and Eddie weren't lying when they said you were drooling over me when I was sitting having my coffee?"

A reluctant nod this time.

Stan's small smile had turned mischievous. "For the first few weeks you tried to pass off Mike's coffee as your own to impress me?"

Bill blushed. "I l-luh-luh-learned how to m-make a caramel macchiato, t-though."

Stan got up slowly, clearing his throat and moving towards Bill. "I guess that makes up for it, then."

"S-So you?-"

Before he could comprehend what Stan meant, he found himself inches away from his face. His eyes were bright, now, like they were whenever he would ask for more sugar, or when Richie would tell a joke (Stan found them funny really), or when they would sit together and Bill would ask intimate questions just because he wanted to know as much as possible about this customer-turned-friend that meant so much to him in so little time.

Stan finished his question for him. “I do. Forgive you, I mean. Do you forgive me?”

Bill nodded. Apparently that’s all his brain would let him do.

Stan’s arms were suddenly wrapped around his waist, pulling him closer, bringing their lips together in a kiss. Bill’s hands automatically grabbed onto the soft fabric of Stan’s sweater as he sighed blissfully, letting himself enjoy what he’d been waiting for for so long. It was sweet, just like he thought it would be, Stan’s hands moving slowly up his waist to his shoulders, then into his hair, stroking the strands and grabbing them gently. As Stan pulled away, Bill chased his mouth and made a noise of protest. “No. Wait. This is amazing. The tables have turned.”

“W-What?”

“I’m the one giving *you* sugar.” He grinned.

“Y-You have n-n-no idea how many cuh-cuh-customers have tried to f-flirt with me w-w-with that line,” Bill said exasperatedly.

Stan kissed the tip of his nose.

“I’m not exactly a regular customer, am I?”

The barista smiled down at him and reciprocated. “I g-guess not.”

Author's Note:

by the way, this is totally richie with his light up shoes:

https://youtu.be/aQu_rUBi9XE